

awaited us. Despite the cold, a gap of sockless, dust-covered ankle showed between his rough brogans and the wrinkled legs of his butternut breeches. Across his mule's withers balanced a rifle. His face was bearded and sad.

"Mornin', Rat-Ankle," drawled our driver, halting the team for converse.

"Mornin', Pate," came the nasal reply.

There was a long interval of silence while the mounted man contemplated us with an unabashed stare. Finally he spoke again.

"Mornin', strangers," he said.

There followed a protracted series of questioning between the native-born as to the health and well-being of their respective families.

I thought I saw the mountaineer's eyes glitter with sudden interest when Weighborne's name was given him, but the light died quickly out of his pupils, leaving only the weariness and sadness of his dull life.

At times the climbs were so steep that we had to trudge alongside, lending a hand at the wheels. The last two miles of the journey, said our driver, would be impassable for a wheeled vehicle. He would have to deposit us and our luggage at Chicken Gizzard Creek.

A little later, while we were walking up a steep incline, Weighborne drew me back out of earshot of the teamster.

"I'd better post you on a few details," he said. "Ever hear of the Keithley assassination?"

I shook my head and he enlightened me. "Keithley was the prosecuting attorney in some rather celebrated murder trials. He was shot to death one afternoon as he came out of the court-room."

"Yes?" I questioned.

"Six months later Con Hoover was shot from the laurel on this road. He had allied himself with those who sought to avenge Keithley."

I nodded my head.

"There were Cale Springer, Bud Dode—I could enumerate other victims, but that is all detail. What concerns us is this. Jim Garvin is county judge. In a rough way he is the political boss of the region and he has built up a fortune. His own gun is unnotched, but a half-dozen men who have incurred his displeasure have come to abrupt ends."

"The newspapers in Louisville and Lexington have intimated that besides being at

the head of fiscal affairs and operating a general store, the judge also issues his orders to a murder syndicate."

"Why?" I demanded in some disgust, "hasn't it been proven?"

"It is difficult to prove things of this sort—unless the defendant is more powerful than the law and when juries walk in terror," Weighborne reminded me. "He has twice been tried for complicity. A company of State guards patrolled the court-house yard to reassure venemore and witnesses. The only result was the defeat, at the next election, of the judge and prosecutor who had made themselves obnoxious."

"Why," I inquired, "aren't those male-factors taken into a civilized circuit, on a change of venue, and tried where jurors are not intimidated?"

"They have been—with the same result," affirmed my informant. "You see, while the jurors were freed from fear, the witnesses knew they must return home."

"Shall we be likely to meet this highly interesting character?" I questioned.

"The store where our wagon turns back," said Weighborne, "is his place."

"Then I am to be careful not to form or express any opinion adverse to judicious homicide? Is that the point?"

Weighborne smiled.

"Our plans involve bringing a branch railroad along the way we have been traveling," he replied, "and the coming of that railroad means the death-knell of Jim Garvin's power. What is still more to the point, our attorney here and the man for whose house we are bound is Calloway Marcus."

"He was Keithley's law-partner, and he is a marked man. He it was who prosecuted Garvin—and lost his official head. His actual head he keeps on his shoulders by riding at the center of a bodyguard. I tell you these matters so that you may watch your words."

"Shall we encounter open hostility at this place?" I inquired.

Weighborne shook his head. "On the contrary, we shall be most courteously received. Politeness is highly esteemed hereabouts. The fact that a man means to 'lay-way' you to-night with a squirrel-gun is not deemed sufficient reason for relaxing his courtesy this afternoon."

An hour later our conveyance drew up at the junction of two ragged roads where thin, outcropping ledges of limestone went

down to the rim of a shallow stream. Beyond the water rose a beelling bluff. One could imagine that when summer brought to this hollow in the hills its richness of green and its profusion of trumpet-flower and laurel and rhododendron, there must be an eye-filling beauty; but now it was unspeakably raw and desolate.

Two houses were in sight, and both were of depressing ugliness. In the fork of the road, where the ground was trodden hard, stood the "store." It was a one-room shack built of logs and boarded over, but innocent of paint. A lean-to porch, disfigured by a few advertising-signs, gave entrance to a narrow door.

The second house sat back and higher

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK. Don't forget this magazine is issued weekly, and that you will get the conclusion of this story without waiting a month.

DIET

A SHORT STORY

BY ELEANOR M. INGRAM



LARGE steak, rare. A ham omelet, a double order of fried potatoes, and a pot of coffee."

Miss Richmond shuddered with disgust, glanced scornfully in the direction of the speaker, and turned her blue eyes to her own waiter.

"A peach, some oatmeal, and dry toast for us, please," she requested. "Did you ever see more offensive carnalism, father? No higher impulses whatever. Positively nothing but animal food!"

Mr. Richmond, a dry, thin, little old gentleman, looked up.

"There was an expression almost wistful in the regard his spectacled eyes fixed on the big, vigorous young man opposite."

"There were the potatoes, my dear," he deprecated.

"Yes, soaked in lard—animal fat! But evidently he has no brain, no finer instincts to care for. I suppose he lives by those enormous muscles he appears to have."

up the slope of the mountain. Its solidity was that of mortised logs, and its windows were protected behind solid shutters. Inside there was plainly an abundance of space, as befitted the dwelling-place of the district's overlord.

A clump of white-armed sycamores partially masked its front, but through the naked branches one could see that for a hundred yards about it, in every direction, lay unbroken clearing, and that for all its civilian seeming it might, if need arose, stand siege against anything less formidable than Gatling guns.

Stamping the cold and cramp from our feet, we settled our score with the liveryman and turned into the store.

Mr. Richmond stirred uncomfortably. "He might overhear you, Judith. And—er—really, my dear, in my day young ladies did not observe men's forms."

The young lady's pretty, sensitive mouth curved superciliously.

"Father, I am an artist! Some day I may find a knowledge of the human form necessary."

"Yes, my dear, but you paint landscapes!"

"Well, I might wish to introduce a figure. Not that kind, of course. Waiter, this tea is too strong; please bring a pitcher of hot water."

"I rather prefer it strong, Judith."

"It is not good for the nerves, father." Perhaps the decided tone of the last statement aroused the attention of the man at the other table.

He paused in the act of transferring the ham omelet to his plate and surveyed the blond youth of the lady with discreet approval mingled with curiosity.

"Your breakfast is all to the good, James," he informed his solicitous attendant. "Who is that gentleman, by the way? I think I have met him somewhere."

"Yes, sir. Mr. Richmond, of Yonkers, and Miss Richmond, sir. Mrs. Richmond has been on a trip up the lake, sir, this week."

"He looks hungry."

"Yes, sir. No doubt, sir. They have that notion."

"Notion?"

"Being hungry, sir. Vegetarians, very strict."

The young man put his fork into the beefsteak and shook his head. He was brown of hair and brown of skin, but gray, steel-gray, as to eyes.

He was good-looking rather by reason of his blatant good health than according to classic standards, but his smile was an illumination.

"Too bad," he commented.

Miss Richmond was seated on the veranda, arranging sketches in a portfolio, twenty minutes later, when their carnivorous neighbor of the dining-room came up, cordially pleased.

"How are you, Mr. Richmond?" said the newcomer, extending his hand. "You haven't quite forgotten meeting me, I hope, last winter at Perry's? With my cousin, Fred Hamilton, you know."

"Why, why certainly, Mr. Hamilton," stammered Mr. Richmond, desperately aware of the fact that he had forgotten. "I am delighted. Judith, my dear, Mr. Hamilton. My daughter, sir."

Miss Richmond started to bow frigidly, but found herself confronted by the stranger's offered hand.

The frank naturalness of the gesture constrained her to yield her fingers, and the confession was fatal.

Before she fairly realized the change her father was ambling off toward a hammock under the trees and Mr. Hamilton had taken the chair beside her.

"Sketches?" he ventured. "I hope they are for more of those promising water-colors I enjoyed at the amateurs' exhibition last winter."

Miss Richmond choked, grasping at a reply.

Pleasure at being known for her work blended with fury at his cool use of the qualification "promising" as applied to what she considered finished work.

"I should not have supposed you had an artistic temperament," she retorted bitingly.

"Indeed I have not!" he exclaimed. "I have not needed it yet."

"Needed it?"

"Why, no. People always seem to allege having one as an excuse for committing divorce, or kleptomania, or any form of convention-breaking. Now I have not wanted to do any of those things so far."

"Mr. Hamilton!"

He rose with her, dismayed.

"Miss Richmond? How have I offended? Did I for a moment seem to suggest that you had one, and need I say that I never thought of such a thing?"

She fell into the chair again, speechless.

It did not seem the right moment to explain that she had always been vain of her "temperamental" qualities.

"Thank you," he resumed his seat.

"May I hope to see the sketches, or is that asking too much, too soon?"

She turned her glinting blue eyes away, conscious that her cheeks were scarlet.

"Pray excuse me. I fear you would not find them even promising, Mr. Hamilton."

"Didn't you like that description?" he inquired, with perfect good-humor. "I only meant that they were somewhat overelaborate—rather, well, oatmeal-fed. If they had a bit more beef behind them—"

This time Miss Richmond rose to actual departure, wrath a sparkling atmosphere around her.

"You heard me at breakfast, then!" she blazed. "Very well, I meant every word I said, sir. It is disgusting, revolting to see any one gorge himself with dead animals! It is evident you have no comprehension of fine sensibilities or what they require. I will go in, please."

He promptly stepped from her path.

"If I had any fine sensibilities I would not feed them on toast and water," he protested meekly. "Shall I see you again before dinner? The canoeing is superb."

Only lifelong training prevented Miss Richmond from stamping her foot in its small, high-heeled white shoe.

"Certainly not. Every time I see you I shall think of a raw beefsteak," she fired at him viciously.

"And every time I see you I shall see a peach," he returned fire.

The slam of the hotel door awoke violently nine old ladies dozing over their crocheting on the hotel porches.

At the luncheon-hour Mr. Richmond came into the family's private sitting-room bearing a portfolio.

"You left it on your chair, my dear," he explained. "The wind scattered your sketches all over the lawn. I—really I should never have gathered them all together again without the kind assistance of Mr. Hamilton. He has spent the last hour at it."

His daughter sat up; her red lips opened, then closed without speech.

"Please tell Mr. Hamilton that I am obliged to him," she said finally. "I shall not go down to luncheon. Your friend would probably be there eating raw flesh and the sight is disagreeable to me. I shall have a wheat biscuit and some fruit sent up here."

Mr. Richmond shifted his weight from one foot to the other, gazed helplessly at his child, then retired from the room without remonstrance.

Mr. Hamilton was indeed at his table.

"Cup of bouillon, some grilled fish, English mutton-chops, and creamed potatoes," he was saying to the waiter, who stood with inclined ear in the high-shouldered attitude peculiar to his tribe.

Mr. Richmond licked his lips nervously and slipped into his seat.

"A wheat biscuit," he had commenced when the cheerful voice of his vis-à-vis interrupted.

"Isn't Miss Richmond coming down? No?" as the other shook his head. "Then won't you come and lunch over here—I'm all alone, too."

Mr. Richmond smiled hesitatingly, and allowed the waiter to change his place.

"A wheat biscuit," he recommended, "and, and a nut sandwich—"

"Oh, try my choice," urged Hamilton breezily. "The ladies are not here to be shocked at our appetites; try my cats."

Mr. Richmond's spectacles slipped off his nose, he contemplated his companion wildly.

"I have not eaten animal food for two years," he faltered.

"Then it is surely time to have some!"

"Judith—my daughter would be horrified!"

"I thought she was not coming down," said Mr. Hamilton.

Mr. Richmond regarded him fixedly, fathoming the pledge implied, and smiled feebly.

"Same order for both," directed the jun-

ior diner. "We will think of dessert afterward. Unless there is apple pie?"

"There is, sir."

"Then that goes, Mr. Richmond?"

Mr. Richmond's eyelids quivered.

"Cream with it," added Mr. Hamilton.

"And coffee, strong."

The luncheon partook of the nature of an orgy, to one member, at least.

The bouillon went to Mr. Richmond's head, the mutton-chops intoxicated him, the coffee rendered him delirious.

With the last mouthful he leaned across the table in a gush of confidence, a forefinger laid on his host's muscular wrist.

"My dear Mr. Hamilton—Hamilton—"

"Try Gene," invited the other man.

"Every one calls me Gene."

"My dear Gene, you will be surprised, but there have been times in the last two years when I have nearly starved. The— the fragrance of beefsteak and onions has goaded me to—really to agitation. Ah!" as the waiter set a tray before him. "You smoke?"

"I have all the vices," assented Hamilton, choosing a cigar. "Well, why don't you eat beefsteak and onions, if you want it?"

"Judith—my daughter—would never consent. Nor would Mrs. Richmond. Our health is much benefited, Judith says. Mrs. Richmond has—lost forty pounds, it is true."

Hamilton blew a ring of smoke and watched it dissipate.

"Benefits the artistic temperament?" he suggested.

"Decidedly so," Mr. Richmond corroborated sadly. "Before my daughter had a picture hung at the amateurs' club, we ate like—like—"

"Vulgar people?"

Mr. Richmond arose, rubbing a napkin across his contaminated lips.

"Happy people," he stated with emphasis.

Miss Richmond was reading a magazine when her father reentered their rooms.

"Ah—Mr. Hamilton desires to say it was a pleasure to recover your sketches, my dear," he observed. "Also that there is a dance here to-night, and he begs the honor of a place on your card."

"I probably shall not go. I am too much affected by this article on the artist's inner conception, by the great idealistic painter, Van Ness," she answered haughtily. "Will

you close the door more tightly, please—the odor of grilled bones comes up from the dining-room most nauseatingly. Why do you sit over in that hot corner, father?"

"I—rather prefer it here," murmured Mr. Richmond.

At nine o'clock that evening Miss Richmond strolled down the stairs and paused at the ballroom door with an air of aloof indulgence, as one elevated above such follies.

Nevertheless, her masses of fair hair were arranged with classic art and she had arrayed herself in a pale-blue chiffon confection altogether enchanting.

She did not observe when some one stopped beside her.

"I have been watching since eight," a cordial voice exclaimed. "I have earned this waltz? Thank you!"

One cannot well launch dramatic refusals in a ballroom.

Stiffed with rage, she felt Gene Hamilton's arm passed around her waist and was obliged to yield her hand to his keeping as the music drew them into its vortex.

"How you can presume, after this morning's impertinence," she began.

"Forgive me that," he asked, frankly and seriously. "I contritely apologize. Will you not remember in extenuation that I was fairly challenged to it?"

He held her slightly from him, his candid, humorous eyes questioning hers.

In spite of herself, Miss Richmond's dimples rippled in view.

"Besides, it was true," he supplemented.

"We have nothing in common to induce our acquaintance, Mr. Hamilton."

"Except our taste for peaches."

This time the audacity won.

Scarlet, she laughed, and was lost.

That was a delightful, if not temperamental, evening.

"There is a certain nook up the lake that ought to be painted," Hamilton told the girl, when they said good night at the foot of the stairs. "May I not take you there to-morrow morning, in my canoe?"

"You can know nothing of art," with a return to frigidity.

"I like to look at nature," he submitted.

"Then—"

"Thank you, thank you!"

Mr. Richmond was pacing the veranda restlessly.

"The smell of the chicken salad is over-

powering," he complained, on Hamilton's appearance.

"So it is; shall we have a plate?"

Mr. Richmond drew back, dismayed.

"Judith!" he essayed.

"Gone up-stairs," assured his tempter blithely. "I hope you approve, sir, of the little canoeing trip we have planned for to-morrow? Will you have coffee with the salad, or would you prefer a bottle of Bass?"

"Ah—certainly! That is to say, yes," articulated Mr. Richmond, with incoherence. "That is—"

"What is the matter with our getting together as often as we can at meal-times?" proposed Hamilton. "Whenever the ladies are not around we might share a table, if you like."

There was a pause, vitally charged with emotion.

"It could only be for a short time," Mr. Richmond dallied with temptation. "Mrs. Richmond will soon return, and she thinks with Judith on these matters. Mr.—Gene—I will!"

"Good!" smiled Mr. Gene.

The next morning was as exquisite as a June morning in the mountains can be.

Hamilton, in white flannels, duly met Miss Richmond, in white linen, and the expedition started like a summer dream.

They returned for luncheon, with some partly finished drawings.

"To-morrow we are going again," Hamilton announced to Mr. Richmond, who greeted them on the veranda. "This is business for Miss Richmond, but it's sheer pleasure to me. And it is cultivating my artistic temperament."

"I thought you did not want one?" reminded the girl.

She was slightly sunburnt and altogether charming under her white parasol.

"Pardon me, there is one I should like very much to possess," he corrected. "But it is not my own."

She flushed richly, finding no retort.

"Er—will you take luncheon in your room to-day, my dear?" queried her father, rubbing his spectacles nervously.

"Why, no! I will be down in five minutes."

Mr. Richmond sighed.

Gene Hamilton rolled his sleeves a trifle higher, leaned two dripping paddles against the railing, and shut one bright gray eye.

"We will not be in to luncheon to-morrow," he observed introspectively.

That afternoon Miss Richmond stayed in her room, reading the article by Mr. Van Ness.

"Genecius Van Ness is one of America's foremost artists," she informed the Philistine, when she appeared on the moonlit veranda that evening. "A European collector paid five thousand dollars for his painting, 'Melisande,' last winter. He has an illuminating and a transcendental mind. He would not dull it by devouring dead animals."

"Sounds like a 'vulture,'" commented Hamilton, *sotto voce*. "How do you know his transcendental highness lives on rose-leaves, Miss Richmond? I knew a poet once, and he couldn't write a sonnet for the Subway unless he was charged with ham and eggs and a mug of ale. He said that was Shakespearean."

"I have seen Mr. Van Ness's work," said the lady icily. "No gross, animal-fied mind could have conceived it. Shelley—"

"Shelley used to live on bread and water until his health broke down, and then his doctor used to get him and feed him on mutton-chops until he was well enough to commence over again," countered Hamilton with unexpected fluency and force.

"Besides, you are not a cadaverous poet; you are a beautiful, healthy young girl—and that is the most beautiful thing ever put upon earth."

Miss Richmond gasped.

"If we introduce personalities, you are not a sensitive artist, full of quivering temperament," she answered.

"Heaven forbid! Do you eat chocolates, Miss Richmond?"

Miss Richmond did. There are people with whom one cannot quarrel.

The next day the two in the canoe started early for the lily-filled nook that was posing for the artist. And they stayed late.

It was two o'clock when Miss Richmond awoke to the situation.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, dismayed. "Luncheon will be over at the hotel! How very stupid of me to forget time, Mr. Hamilton—and why did you not remind me?"

"You have got the genuine fervor, all right," he said, more seriously than she had yet heard him speak, from the seat where he had been silently studying her for the last hour.

"You will make good. But this is sun-

mer in the mountains—won't you please call me Gene, like every one else? I will try to deserve it, and this canoe is too light to carry much heavy formality."

"I—"

"Thank you! Now, I brought some lunch."

"Really?"

"Pray observe."

He produced a tiny hamper, offered her a plate and a fringed napkin, and poured her a glass of soda-water.

The pile of snowy, cool sandwiches allured the eye. Miss Richmond opened one daintily, then dropped it with indignant haste.

"Mr.—"

"Gene, please."

"I detect the name of Eugene!"

"So do I. Try Gene, please."

She choked.

"I cannot eat these. They are meat!"

"Tongue and minced chicken."

"Set the plate on the bottom of the boat."

"Pray eat your lunch. I cannot eat this, as you know."

"Why not?"

She gave him a glance of blighting contempt. She really was extremely hungry.

Hamilton proceeded to unwrap a lemon pie, surveying his rebellious guest.

"How long is it since you became an ultravegetarian, Miss Richmond, may I ask?"

"Two years."

"And before that you ate like the common herd?"

Silence.

"Now, honestly, Miss Richmond, you do not pretend that your artistic talent is only two years old? Why, to do that work of yours you must have been growing toward it all your life and have studied for years!"

Her mouth and brow relaxed at the implied compliment, but she maintained her ground.

"Excuse me; I cannot."

"Surely you are not going to tell me that your temperament is too weak to overcome one luncheon?"

Again there was a pause. Miss Richmond's lovely eyes rested pensively on the food.

Presently he rearranged her plate and offered it to her with his boyish smile.

"I can't eat if you will not," he pointed

out. "And I am hungry; you know my carnal appetite. I—well, I am your host, you know—would it not be gracious to accept what I have to offer?"

She colored to the wave of fair hair on her forehead.

"If you put it that way—"

"Please. I will not tell."

She took the plate.

She had meant to nibble one sandwich; she ate four. At the lemon pie she demurred.

"Animal fat," she began.

"I should enjoy some," he admitted plaintively.

She ate two pieces.

It was three o'clock when they reached the hotel. Mr. Richmond met them in the hall.

"Your mother is up-stairs, my dear," he announced. "She arrived—er—after luncheon." He passed his hand over his waistcoat with a furtive glance at his daughter's escort. "Did you have luncheon, Judith?"

"Oh, yes!" she assured him hurriedly. "Gene—Mr. Hamilton had brought some."

"Some," finished Hamilton, with his usual serenity.

Mrs. Richmond appeared at dinner. She was a handsome, portly lady with amiable eyes and an air of wistfulness for which there seemed no adequate explanation.

She liked Mr. Hamilton from the moment of his introduction; the fact was apparent in her very sincere cordiality. And she made no objection to the sketching-trip planned for the next day.

"I think we will not be back for luncheon, Mrs. Richmond," the young man informed her. "You see, the light is at its best between twelve and two, and Miss Richmond intends this study for the next water-color exhibit."

"Certainly," acquiesced the matron pleasantly.

Miss Richmond looked significantly at him.

"I will bring the lunch," she signified.

"Thank you," acknowledged Hamilton. She did bring it, next day.

She expected reprisals, but there were none.

Gene Hamilton ate crackers spread with nut-paste, an unbuttered roll, and an orange. And he thanked his hostess gracefully.

That was too much. She surrendered impulsively.

"You are very generous," she avowed, flushed and embarrassed. "I—I suppose I am peculiar. Next time you may—choose the luncheon!"

The smile he flashed to her was dazzling as sun on snow.

"That's sport!" he approved gaily. "Turn and turn."

It rained next day. There was no canoeing. Mr. Richmond and his daughter went into the nearest town to shop, as a diversion.

A little after noon Mrs. Richmond wandered down to the hotel parlor, where she found Hamilton.

"I did not care to go with them," she told him. "I am not so vigorous as I used to be before we took up this health diet. Doubtless I am benefited otherwise, Mr. Hamilton."

"All your family are good enough to call me Gene, Mrs. Richmond; I wish you would honor me so far."

She patted his shoulder maternally.

"I have a weakness for nice boys; you must have learned it, Gene. As I was saying, in spite of its advantages—which I am not wise enough to understand fully—I am less vigorous than during our old diet."

"Then why not return to it, dear lady?"

"Impossible! Judith and Mr. Richmond would be shocked, scandalized. They would even find the sight revolting. He has been highly enthusiastic from the first. No, I could never admit it to them, but yet—really, when you were eating that broiled steak this morning, I positively coveted it. Now, never tell!"

Hamilton stood up, his coaxing glance a snare for the feet.

"Mrs. Richmond, come to luncheon with me; please do. My kind of a luncheon, I mean. Oh," as her lips parted, "I will never tell."

"If they should ever hear—"

"I'll take care of that part. I heard the gong ten minutes ago; shall we go in?"

It was an exhilarating affair, that luncheon.

"Why not lunch together every time that the others are not around?" suggested Hamilton, at its close. "We might make it a mutual dissipation."

Mrs. Richmond, rosy with mirth and meat, smiled crookedly.

"If they ever hear, they'll crush me," she yielded.

Mr. Richmond and Miss Richmond returned that evening. Sunshine and turquoise skies returned next day.

After breakfast Hamilton and the girl put off in the canoe. A morning of absorbed, satisfying work lay before them.

At two o'clock Miss Richmond's pencil fell from her tired fingers.

"Lunch?" invited her companion. She nodded, and settled back on the cushions to watch him unpack the tiny hamper.

When he passed her plate she sat up sharply.

"Oh!" she cried, her eyes on the strictly vegetarian banquet. "I said you might choose this time."

"And so disarmed me."

"But—but you will not like it!"

He laughed and shrugged.

"Pardon me; I shall do very well."

She took a nut-paste cracker, then suddenly let it fall overboard as she leaned toward him with sparkling blue eyes and excitement-rouged cheeks.

"Why are you doing it?" she challenged impetuously. "Why do you want to make me change the way I live? For you do—you do! You have some reason, I feel."

"Yes, I have," he quietly answered.

"You have in you the possibility of doing fine, true work. I want you to drop fads and fancies and affected temperaments—I want you to live and eat and think sanely and humanly, and to do sane, human work. You can; will you?"

Breathless, she stared at him, mechanically gripping her plate.

"I will! I am so glad you think that of me—that I can. You have made me think," she panted. "I do believe you are right; I will try it, at least. Or—no, no—I cannot! What would every one say? What would my father and mother think? You don't know how I have talked about diet."

"Try it every day with me, at luncheon, to commence," he proposed. "I will not tell, on honor, until you are ready!"

Almost in tears, she tried to smile content.

"There is another reason," Hamilton added less certainly. "But I will tell it later, if I may."

As they left the canoe at the hotel dock the girl asked suddenly:

"What is your occupation, may I ask? You—you do seem to care for art."

"Or the artist. I am a paint merchant

in a line of my own, Miss Richmond. I sold and exported about ten thousand dollars' worth in the last year."

"Oh! Thank you."

The next two weeks passed very placidly at the hotel.

Only, the Richmond family developed a singular irregularity as to the hours of meals.

Mr. Richmond acquired the habit of rising early for breakfast and sharing that repast with Gene Hamilton.

Mrs. Richmond, on the other hand, found it accorded best with her excellent health to breakfast late, after her daughter had departed in the canoe with Mr. Hamilton, and while her husband read his newspaper on the veranda.

It was at tête-à-tête breakfast one morning, that Mr. Richmond leaned across the table toward his companion.

"You have given Judith a great deal of your time, my dear Gene," he remarked confidentially. "I—er—it has occurred to me that you might have an ulterior motive."

"I have," corroborated Gene heartily. "I want to marry her if I can. If you will give me half an hour, sir, I will show you my credentials. I hope you will not object to me as a son-in-law?"

Mr. Richmond feebly shook his head.

"I should be delighted, my dear boy. But I fear it is no use. She has an—er—an ideal."

"Pooh!" said Hamilton. "I had a parrot once, but I drowned it."

A canoe is an excellent place for many things, but it is not suited to a proposal. Hamilton proposed in the grove at sunset. He had a fine taste in the fitness of events.

"But you will not ask me to stop painting," pleaded Miss Richmond, some moments later, her accents somewhat smothered by the athletic embrace in which she was held. "You know I could not, even for you, Gene. And now I am doing better work than I ever did before. You will not want me to?"

"No, of course not," laughed Gene, flushed by triumph. "Why, sweetheart, we'll share a studio!"

"We—"

"We?"

"Surely. You see, when I reminded your father that my cousin Dick Hamilton had introduced us, he had forgotten all about it and jumped to the idea that my name was Hamilton, too. But, in fact—"

"Gene?"

"Why, I was afflicted at birth with the title of—*Genecius Van Ness!*"

The hotel possessed one private dining-room.

It was engaged for that evening by Gene, for a betrothal festivity planned by himself.

The three guests arrived at quarter to six, ten minutes of six, and six o'clock, respectively. And the glances they cast upon each other were uneasy and perturbed to an extent out of all accord with their intimate affection, in spite of their affected gaiety.

"My dear family to be," Gene opened pleasantly, "I have suspected for some time that we were misunderstanding each other. I want to clear that up. I am not referring to myself; you know all about that already. I have invited you, each one separately, to dine with me to-night, and to choose your own menu. Please wait," as they rose in varying degrees of consternation. "Let me say first that I approve of your excellent

taste. Ox-tail soup, veal cutlets, and tenderloin of beef are among my own favorites."

But they had ceased to hear him.

"My dear Andrew, I fear I have a carnal nature," wailed Mrs. Richmond from her napkin. "It was the smell of Gene's steak and mushrooms at first!"

Mr. Richmond had flung himself out of his chair and his thin arms clasped her poorly figure.

"My dear Diana, say no more! We will have them every day. I—I, too, am unfit for higher diet."

"But I will grow stout, Andrew!"

"Do," cried Mr. Richmond in an ecstasy. "I like you that way."

"Judith"—Mrs. Richmond commenced with fresh recollection.

A very ruddy Judith was looking at them.

"Never mind Judith," counseled her lover. "Judith ordered the beef tenderloin!"

MEN AND AEROPLANES

By Paul West

THE aeroplane's a wondrous thing.

It soars above on rigid wing;

The very clouds it seems to touch,
Yet flies about on nothing much.

In which respect it's very like
An awful lot of folks we strike!

They rise and soar above the crowd,
Superior and exceeding proud;
They do a lot of showy things,
Yet hardly seem to move their wings.
They show that they look down on us,
Which makes us very envious!

The aeroplane's a wondrous thing.

It sometimes falls, ker-zipl! ker-zing!

In which respect it's quite the same
As certain persons we could name!

They do their airy, fairy stunts
High in the air, then all at once,
Just when we think they're really some,
A sudden tip, and down they come!

High flying is a lovely game.

It's jolly, yes! but just the same,

It's dangerous, so have a care

When nothing holds you up but—*air!*

THE GOLDEN BLIGHT*

A SERIAL

BY GEORGE ALLAN ENGLAND

Author of "Darkness and Dawn," "The House of Transmutation," "The Elsie of Hate," "Beyond White Seas," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

BECAUSE of a remarkable discovery, John Storm, physicist, holds within his grasp the power of the world. For the world's power is gold, and Storm has discovered a means of disintegrating the precious substance into a worthless ash. Not only can he effect this wondrous transmutation in objects close at hand, but he can project it across the seas, so that neither the jeweled crown of England nor the golden dragon throne of China is safe from his blighting power. Actually does Storm illustrate the power of his discovery to the billionaire Murchison, the richest man in the world, by suddenly reducing his golden cigar-case, his stick-pipe, his eye-glasses to white powder. Having convinced him that he is able to bring unheard of havoc upon the fortunes of Murchison and other capitalists, Storm tells him that what he desires is perfect harmony throughout the earth, complete universal peace, the abolition of war. And Murchison is going to bring this about! Unless he complies with his demand, Storm says he shall witness the most appalling exhibition of his gold blighting power at a brilliant banquet Murchison is giving the following evening.

At the time ordained by "the scarlet maniac" things happen in that banquet-hall. The gold dinner-service disintegrates. A lady's bracelet vanishes; a gentleman's shirt-studs go; the gold hands of the clock; the medals worn by one of the notables disappear. Confusion reigns, but silence is enjoined. Next day Storm meets three of the most influential of the capitalists at Murchison's office and repeats his ultimatum. When left alone, they resolve to get rid of him, and Murchison contrives to get the affair into his own hands. Suddenly, from Wall Street come sounds of turmoil, of fear, of panic. The Blight is operating!

From the windows of Murchison's offices the triumvirate watch the excitement on the Street. Panic and turmoil reign, for all the gold above the surface of the ground in the financial district has been blighted. Excitement runs at fever heat throughout the city. The German Jew, Braunschweig, the world's greatest financier, hears of the blight, and, loading his yacht with silver, starts for America at express speed. Murchison hires a gang of assassins to get rid of Storm. After drugging him well in his apartments, they turn on the gas and leave him to his fate.

CHAPTER XXIII.

To Work Again!

SICK, very sick, weak and dazed and trembling, with a stabbing pain in the forehead, a dull, numb lassitude shrouding him, John Storm came gradually up, back again to life, to consciousness.

He lapsed; then, groaning, half revived; then for a time lay agonized and sensing only pain. But thought, returning, urged him to the task of life.

And, scraping all his scattered forces, as a miser might claw together some few pence overlooked by looters, he managed to raise

himself on his right elbow and with bleared eyes blink round.

"God! I still live?" thought he vaguely. "My room? My bed? I'm here. But—"

Exhausted, he fell back. A little while he lay inert, waiting for the *throb-throb* of agony in his head to abate. His mouth was dry and bitter. A horrible lassitude enveloped him; his muscles were mere lifeless tissue, his bones no stronger than their marrow.

But the will-power in him spurred him on. Dimly, as in a dream, he saw the pulled-down shades, the gas-fixture near the chiffonier and—with a wave of recollection—the stop-cock turned full on.

* This story began in *The Cavalier* for May 18.